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In speaking of illicit

583 intercourse with another man's wife, they use the expression *gun*
[837] *amot*, which is fairly translatable by 'steal' and is applied also to acts of theft in the ordinary sense in which we use that term. It is, of course, dangerous to rely too much on linguistic evidence, but
[684] it is noteworthy that to 'steal' a man's wife and to steal his ceremonial currency were once bracketed together, by a man with whom I was discussing the subject of theft, as crimes belonging to the same category, and that in some cases the same penalty has been exacted for both. All the people with whom I discussed the matter in relation to marriage gave me the impression that no distinction existed in their minds between paying for a wife and paying for anything else of importance.

586 The rules governing the operation of the custom are entirely compatible with this view. If the woman refuses to perform the duties of a wife, her husband can, and does, divorce her and demand his currency back—he is not receiving what he paid for so he repudiates the purchase. But if she has cause to divorce him, he does not get his currency returned to him, the break-down of the transaction was not her fault. If she dies without giving
768 him a child, he will expect to be repaid, unless he receives a sister
587 in her place. Pinari told me that the currency handed over in respect of Riro, the wife of his son Wasē, who had died, childless, not very long before my visit, would be returned, except one string, which was to be retained by her relatives 'because her body stays here', the woman having been buried at Kurtatchi. I have not seen a similar custom recorded elsewhere. If her death
845 occurs in child-birth, and the child lives, repayment is made in
768 part only, one string being retained 'for the child'. But if the child dies too, the full amount is usually asked and given. For a wife dying after having borne more than one child, no repayment is expected—the husband has had his money's worth, so to speak.

562 It does not follow that the woman is regarded as the absolute property of the man to do as he likes with. That is definitely not
● 581 the case. What seems to me to be the crucial point was put very clearly by a woman, Matēv, on our way back from witnessing this very transaction, when the matter was naturally the subject of conversation. She said:

'Tab to wen nor a kiki pi mon.'
Thing pay we genitals of woman.

i.e. 'What we pay for is the woman's genitals.' That is to say,

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it is not the woman that is bought, but the right to use her body for the satisfaction of the husband and the procreation of children by him. With this the man also acquires the right to be looked after and provided with food properly prepared, and failure on the part of the wife in these respects is regarded as ground for divorce. It is a wife, as distinct from a woman in her capacity as an individual, that is purchased when the strings of ceremonial currency pass from the bridegroom's family to that of the bride. She is not thereby prevented from being a person with rights of her own in the community, for her position in this society is far from being a negligible one, as will be seen from other portions of this book. My impression is that while they definitely regard the handing over of the ceremonial currency as a commercial transaction, it is not in any way detrimental to the dignity of the woman, nor does this point of view react unfavourably on her status in the community.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SEXES PRIOR TO MARRIAGE

It will be noted that there is no feature in the series of betrothal ceremonies, nor in the final ceremony preceding the consummation of the marriage, involving a test of the girl's virginity. The question was never brought up spontaneously by the natives in our conversations regarding various aspects of sex and marriage, and the lack of response to such guarded inquiries as I made—direct questions being liable to produce misleading results—would seem to indicate that the matter is not considered of primary importance. It is noteworthy, too, that out of several hundred folk-tales and legends in my collection not a single one has any bearing on this point, though practically every other aspect of the sexual life is illustrated therein. Two cases of rape occur in my records, but both were attended by special circumstances. One, complicated by incest, has already been discussed (p. 77). The other (referred to on p. 230) concerned a girl who had attained adult years without being married owing to a deformity. Perhaps the fact that in the past it was only exceptionally that a girl was not claimed by a husband at or before sexual maturity accounts for the absence of stress on the subject. Nowadays, in the more sophisticated villages, where the age of marriage is getting appreciably later, and some freedom of choice as to whether a girl marries or not is just possible, a new situation is arising. In the few such cases known

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same proportion of each as would be obtained from a similar census in an equal number of households in our own society. But the basis of happiness or unhappiness would in most cases differ; more or less, perhaps, according to what stratum of our own society the sample used for comparison represented. Perhaps one Kurtatchi man's definition of a good wife would be accepted by a certain proportion of European husbands. Speaking of his own wife, he said: 'She looks after me well, and doesn't talk too much, and she doesn't play with other men while I am away.'

I have often wondered at the amount of ill treatment some of the women put up with without having recourse to divorce. They look upon scoldings and beatings and neglect, often undeserved, as a matter of course. Usually quarrels are quickly forgotten and neither party seems to bear malice. I think few women are persistently and continually ill-treated by their husbands. Certain men had a reputation in the village for being cruel to their wives, but on the whole, such cases were not typical, and the men were looked upon with disfavour by the other villagers. But practically every husband in the place beat his wife occasionally. Chastisement is usually administered inside the hut. I never witnessed such an episode, but I have often heard screams coming from a hut and been told that So-and-so's husband was beating her, the word used being *ib*, the same as 'to strike' or 'to fight'. It appears to be done not so much in a burst of sudden anger as deliberately, in cold blood, as a punishment. For example, one man beat his wife because he thought she did not take sufficient care of his old father, with whom they were living, when he was ill. But some men—and it was these who had the reputation for ill-treating their wives—would do it in anger and on very slight provocation, e.g. if a meal was not ready when they wanted it. One of them, who had three wives and was unkind to all of them, told me himself that one of his wives had left him because he beat her with his walking-stick; he was angry with her because she wanted to make his daughter by another wife work for her. He had no hesitation in telling me this, and was certain that the provocation was ample and that the right was on his side. She came back, however, after two days, and, as he put it: 'When I saw her I was not angry any more, and she was not either.' The same man told me, apparently priding himself on his righteousness, that he never beats his eldest wife, since she became blind, because he is sorry for her. But he